

COLGATE & COMPANY JERSEY CITY PLANT: B-3
(Colgate-Palmolive Company Jersey City Plant: B-3)
47-51 York Street
Jersey City
Hudson County
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-71-F

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9-JERCI,
18F-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Northeast Area Office
National Park Service
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: 47-51 York Street, Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey

Significance: B-3 was a heavily rebuilt and modified version of the original 1847 Colgate soap kettle house, and was one of three structures housing the Jersey City plant's 20th-century soap kettles: it was thus part of the core of soapmaking operations here. It was an important early component of Colgate & Company's two-decade plant expansion c1903-22. Although B-3 contained fragments of the original kettle house, it was completely altered into an early 20th-century structure, and was not individually significant. It was, however, significant as a component of the Colgate Jersey City plant, and as part of the oldest block at the plant.

Description: B-3 was a five-story-plus-basement, predominantly steel-and-brick-framed, brick-clad structure, designed for the containment of soap kettles and related industrial processing. The structure was 78.5 by 83.4 feet, with four-by-eight asymmetrical structural bays, and Romanesque Revival influences on its York Street facade between buildings B-2 and B-4 (HAER Nos. NJ-71-E and NJ-71-G). This facade included a corbelled and stepped brick entablature, segmentally arched window surrounds and Flemish bond coursing with tinted mortar. The two westernmost bays of the nine-bay facade were in a raised elevator tower, distinguished from the remaining facade by its height and corner wall buttresses. The predominant original window type was a transomed 1/1 double hung wood window set into a wooden enframing, followed by an industrial metal multi-pane sash with hoppers or louvers. Most of the fenestration was infilled with mismatched brick after c1950. There was a wood-framed, truncated hipped roof partially supported by fifth-floor steel I-beam columns, and consisting of felt and gravel on cinder concrete and hollow tile blocks, with a brick parapet with some bluestone coping. Skylights, brick chimneys, and later aluminum vents and stacks punctuated the roof surface. Access to the building was through a truck bay on the ground floor alley or from the interior of the block (NORTH ELEVATION; see HAER No. NJ-71-D, Figure 2).

* Capitalized references are photographs included with this documentation, or with other documentation packages for HAER No. NJ-71 and associated structures.

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The brick walls, stepped brick piers in the brick-walled basement, and brick columns on the floors above supported multi-sized steel beams and girders, some of which in turn supported terra cotta floor vaults. In 1988, painted brick walls, cement-finished floors and ceilings, and firebrick partitions on the fourth floor comprised most interior finishes. Wooden framing elements or reinforcement members represent fragments of the 1847 Colgate kettle house (FIRST FLOOR TO SOUTH; DETAIL OF CEILING VAULTS, THIRD FLOOR).

The interior of B-3 was filled with a variety of soap pumps, soap kettles and tanks, and tanks for caustic, lye, and other material, with the second floor forming a major division between two groups of such equipment. Dense I-beam grillages supported the steel vessels. From the second floor, seven soap kettles of about 13.5- and 20-foot diameters rose about twenty-nine feet, rising just above the fifth floor to conical stainless steel covers and intake pipes for soap ingredients. A steel mezzanine platform on the fifth floor supported three rectangular caustic tanks. A number of simplex steam soap pumps in the southeast corner of the second floor moved material in and out of the soap kettles. Two large steel rectangular soap or lye tanks filled part of the basement and rose through the first floor. The basement also had four simplex and one duplex steam soap pumps. The first floor included a circular soap remelting vat, three circular soap tanks, and a bank of pipe manifolds on the south wall which allowed for maintenance and regulation of material movements among B-3 tanks (BASEMENT TO SOUTH; FIRST FLOOR TO SOUTH; FIRST FLOOR SOUTH WALL; SECOND FLOOR SOUTHEAST CORNER; REMELT VAT, FIRST FLOOR; DETAIL OF SOAP KETTLE TOP, FIFTH FLOOR).

History:

William Colgate purchased the B-3 site in 1845 and 1847. He demolished a existing tobacco factory on the site, and erected a three-story structure by late 1847 which housed all his Jersey City soapmaking operations until the early 1850s (Hudson County Deed Books 1847; Colgate & Company n.d.). This was the first Colgate soap factory building in Jersey City. By the 1860s, the original structure became a boiling or kettle house powered by a separate engine and boiler house to the south (on part of the later site of B-13, HAER No. NJ-71-M). Consulting engineer William P. Field designed B-3, originally called Building D, as a larger kettle house in 1904-05. The new structure incorporated some basement and first floor elements of the original kettle house (Field 1904-05). The company completed B-3 1905-06, adding new kettles and tanks until c1910. Along with the office building and B-7/B-8 (HAER Nos. NJ-71-A and NJ-71-J), built during or just after the firm's 1906 centennial year, B-3 had commemorative signage. A (probably painted) advertisement on the northwest corner, facing west and beginning at the top of the elevator tower, proclaimed:

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100 YEARS
1806-1906
COLGATE'S
SOAP AND
PERFUMES

The sign, which does not appear in original plans, was removed some years ago (Muirhead, ed. 1910: 69).

Many of the tanks were rebuilt c1937-40, with the steel kettle tops evidently added for the first time. Later alterations included aluminum vents and stacks on the roof c1942, elevator replacement c1952, and several episodes of reinforcement, repair, or removal of tanks c1955-70. B-3 was demolished in 1989.

Sources:

Plans and Drawings

Colgate-Palmolive Company retains linen or blueprint copies of most, though not necessarily all, plans and drawings made for B-3. Those listed below pertain to the structure and major equipment elements; some other plans of operating hardware are not listed. As of late 1989, these documents are maintained by the engineering department in the plant's L Block (HAER No. NJ-71-SS). Future researchers should contact the company's Office of Corporate Communications at 300 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022, for access.

Colgate & Company/Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company

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|---------|---|
| 1905 | Proposed Building "D" [first floor plan]. Dwg No. 2-1192. |
| 1906-07 | [Set of six floor plans for D-Building]:
Basement, Dwg. No. 2-1346
1st Floor, Dwg. No. 2-1345
2nd Floor, Dwg. No. 2-1344
3rd Floor, Dwg. No. 2-1343
4th Floor, Dwg. No. 2-1342
5th Floor, Dwg. No. 2-1341 |
| 1927 | West Elevation Building B-3 at Driveway. Dwg. No. 2-1178. |
| 1937a | Steel Framing as Altered Jan. 1937 - B-3-1. Dwg. No. 2-2025. |
| 1937b | Conical Stainless Steel Cover for 13'0" Dia. Soap Kettle - B-3-1. Dwg. No. 2-2060. |
| 1940a | New Soap Kettle to Replace Present Kettle K-8/B-3 - Bst & 1st Floor. Dwg. No. 2-2325 |

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- 1940b Stainless Steel Cover - Flue Connection & Vapor Duct for K8 Kettle. Dwg. No. 2-2336
- 1940c 11'6" Dia x 15'4 5/16" High Soap Kettle K8. Dwg. No. 2-2327.
- 1940d Closed Steam Coil - Open Steam Coils/Inlet Spray Nozzles and Swing Pipe - B3 - Bst & 1st. Dwg. No. 2-2328.
- 1940e New Soap Kettle to Replace Present Kettle K-2 in Bldg B-3 - Bst & 1st Fl. Dwg. No. 2-2332.
- 1940f New Soap Kettle K-2/15'11" x 13'11" x 14'3 3/8" Outside. Dwg. No. 2-2334.
- 1940g All Coils, Nozzle Pipes, Balance Weight & Standpipe for New Soap Kettle K2. Dwg. No. 2-2335.
- 1940h Operators Platform and Stainl. Steel Vapor Duct for New Soap Kettle K-2. Dwg. No. 2-2336.
- 1942 [Six drawings for roof repair and alteration]:
Roof Plan Building B-3 Showing Present Steel Framing to be Removed. Dwg. No. 2-2451.
Framing Plan New Roof Over Building B-3. Dwg. No. 2-2452.
Cross Sections Showing Elevations of Roof Above 5th Floor - Bldg B-3. Dwg. No. 2-2453.
Scale Details for Beam and Girder Connections B-3 Roof. Dwg. No. 2-2454.
Scale Details Showing Beam and Girder Connections to Existing Steel Columns for New Roof Const. B-3. Dwg. No. 2-2455.
Plan & Elevations Showing Position of Beam & Girders at Col. A, B-3-Roof. Dwg. No. 2-2458.
- 1952 Structural Changes for Bldg B-3 Elevator. Dwg. No. 2-3466.
- 1954 Construction Details for Soap Kettles K-22 & K-23. Dwg. No. 2-3639.
- 1955 New Bottom for Kettle 9/B-3-1. Dwg. No. 2-3841.
- 1961a Layout of Bldg B-3-Basement. Dwg. No. 2-5029.
- 1961b Layout of New Steel Beams and Concrete Floor/1st Floor of Bldg. B-3. Dwg. No. 2-4662.
- 1964 Typical Kettle. Dwg. No. 2-5057.
- 1970 Layout of New Steel Beams and Concrete Floor/1st Floor of Bldg. B-3. Dwg. No. 2-6059

Field, William P., C.E. [Newark, NJ]

1904-05 Proposed Building D/Colgate & Co. [partially complete set]:
2nd & 3rd, 4th & 5th Floor Plans. Sheet No. 2.
4th & 5th Floor Plan & Side Elevation. Sheet No. 7.
Framing Around Tanks - 1st Floor. Unnumbered.
Detail of Small Tanks. Unnumbered
Proposed Tank No. 20. 2 dwgs., unnumbered.
Framing for Small Tanks - 5th Floor. Unnumbered.

McClintic-Marshall Construction Company

1904 [large, incomplete set of structural steel drawings]

Bibliography

Colgate & Company

n.d. Untitled ledger, labelled "2/see list" on cover, with entries
1847-93. As of late 1989, on file, Colgate-Palmolive Co.,
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Crooker, H.M.

1931b Soap Boiling Department. The Pulse III,8: 10-11.

Culver, I.B.

1866 Map of Jersey City. On file, New York Public Library.

Dripps, M.

1850 Map of Jersey City and Van Vorst Township, New Jersey. New
York.

Hardin, Shields T.

1959 The Colgate Story. New York: Vantage Press.

Hudson County Deed Books

1845 Vol. 12, p. 570.

1847 Vol. 9, p. 423.

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Muirhead, Walter C., ed.

1910 Jersey City of Today... Jersey City.

Washington Fire Insurance Company of New York

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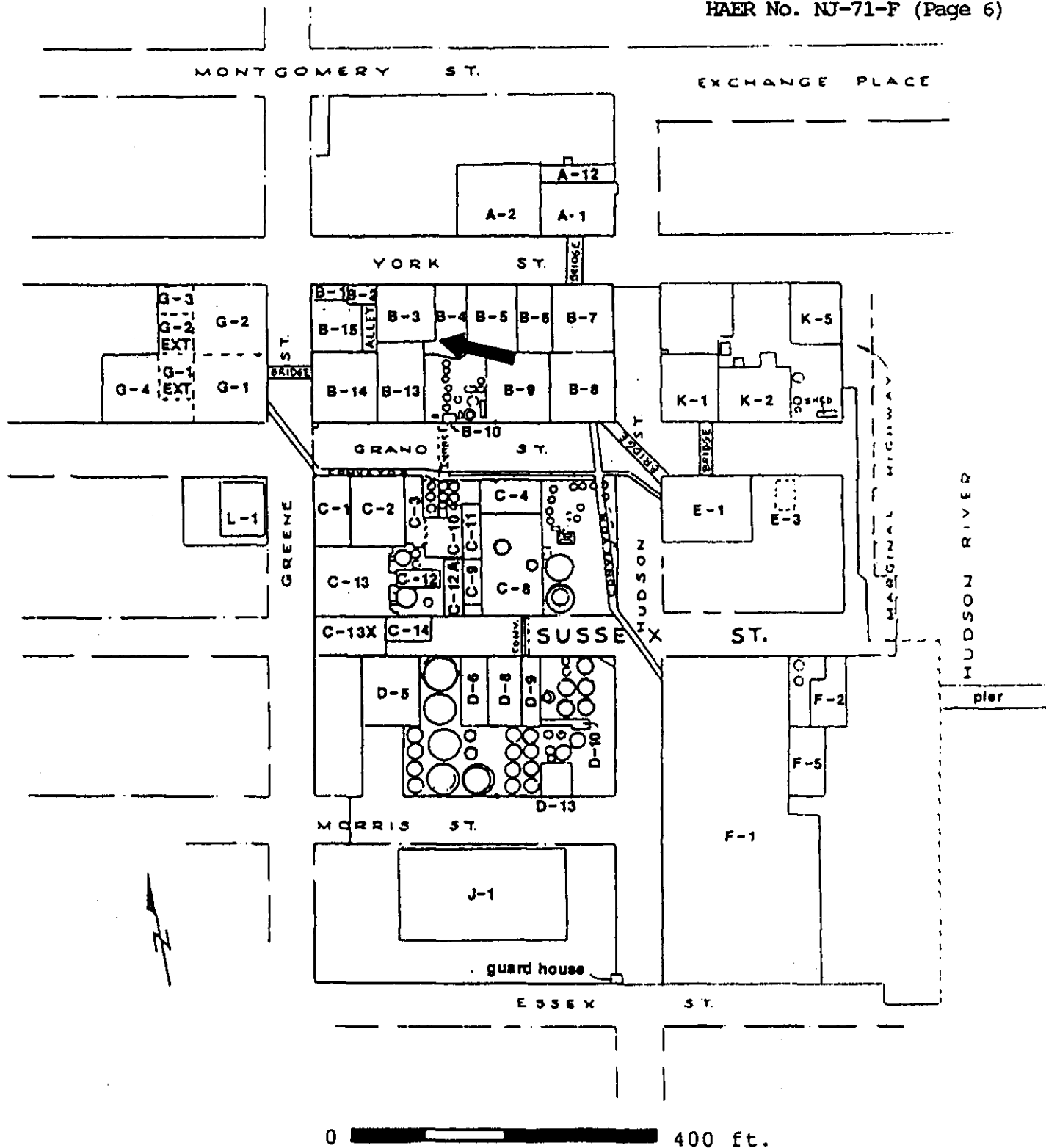


Figure 1. LOCATION OF B-3 AT COLGATE JERSEY CITY PLANT